

0
te-
her
s.
bed
and
the

THREE WOMEN IN ONE BOAT.

THREE WOMEN IN ONE BOAT.

A River Sketch.

BY

CONSTANCE MAC EWEN,

AUTHOR OF

"SOAP," "MISS BEAUCHAMP," "A PHILISTINE," ETC.

IN ONE VOLUME.

LONDON :

F. V. WHITE & CO.,
31, SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND, W.C.

1891.

717

CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I.—“WE TALK ABOUT IT”	1
II.—WE TALK ABOUT IT AGAIN, AND THIS TIME ARE JOINED BY THE CHAMPION OF THE THAMES AND THE CALENDAR	10
III.—WE TAKE OUR PRELIMINARY SPIN UP STREAM	17
IV.—WE GET AWAY UP STREAM	23
V.—RIVER MEN, WOMEN, AND THINGS	30
VI.—LANDLADIES AND GREEK ODES	36
VII.—WE HAVE A DREADFUL NIGHT.—WE SEE AND HEAR STRANGE THINGS	48
VIII.—WE CONTINUE AMONG THE DUCAL DUKES AND THE GHOSTAL GHOSTS	54
IX.—WE CALMLY DISCUSS THE OLD WOMAN IN THE LONG BLACK CLOAK AND POKE- BONNET. WE REALLY SAW HER, BEING, AS WE ARE, THREE OF THE MOST UN- IMAGINATIVE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD	61
X.—WE RACE WITH THE PECKSNIFF’S DREAM	64
XI.—FISHING FOR ROACH AND TALKING ABOUT HENLEY REGATTA	72
XII.—TARPAULIN EXPERIENCES AND ETON BOYS	82
XIII.—MONKEY ISLAND AND THE FRYING-PAN	88
XIV.—GLORIANA ON HER BARGE	92
XV.—THE DUCAL’S LAUNCH TURNS UP, AND SELINA GOES QUITE MAD	101

THREE WOMEN IN ONE BOAT.

CHAPTER I.

"WE TALK ABOUT IT."

It all came about this way. Selina Davidson was my great friend, and Sabina Ann Pipkin was her great friend (that means Selina's). You must not expect me to be grammatical, epigrammatical, or any other "atical." I'm a sort of girl who was always a dunce at school and a duffer out of it; but I'm determined to show the world that what brains may have denied to us three, muscles and biceps have done for us, and how we "three women in one boat" didn't make half such a mess of it as Mr. Jerome's "three men in a boat"—not by a long way.

As I said before, it all came about this way.

Selina Davidson came to tea at my rooms, Girton. I was going "down"; in fact, we were all going "down." They had rusticated me because I would have young Arnold to tea, and young Arnold was not my brother's friend, but only my brother's, brother's, cousin's, great aunt's, nephew's, sister's, brother-in-law's, niece's uncle. When I had made out that genealogical calendar I thought how mistaken people were to say I had no brains, and I nearly wept. I didn't quite, because the Calendar I have just alluded to was looking on, and I

thought of the unbecoming moist look of tears, and I wanted to be as attractive as Sabina Ann Pipkin, who is my rival in arms (I mean out of arms). Sabina's no baby, awfully old, long in the tooth, and all that sort of thing. But, as I said before—perhaps I had better say, as I said behind; I'm sick of that “before”—Selina Davidson came to afternoon tea, and, of course, Sabina Ann Pipkin was with her. Selina had Mr. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat* all under her arm—under her thumb, as she said; for Selina's a bit of a “wag,” if not quite a wit—in fact, we “wag” much more than we ought, and it nearly got us into trouble, “we three women in one boat,” but not quite; but I'll come to that by and by. Selina had my fine china cup in her hand, and was talking, as she always does talk, nineteen to the dozen, when I saw the cup go, and she giving forth with nothing but the handle between her finger and thumb. I was disgusted; not so Sabina Ann Pipkin; she simply shrieked:

“The tea was too heavy for the cup, and the cup too fine for Selina's strong grip! You are only fit to tow a boat down stream, you great big creature!”

I saw Selina turn colour. Selina always turns colour at the least thing. She says it's sensitiveness, but I say, “Not at all; it's liver.” O, how we have discussed that question of the liver! brought it out in every possible edition and form, down to Dissent and up to Ritual. All diversities of opinion, we agree, are “liver.” Liver makes war and peace; liver is the great distinction between grave and gay, saint and sinner. “Attend to your liver!” I always end up with, when Selina trims her tongue with a scorpion's dressing, and sets everybody right, from the Queen on the throne to the pew-opener at St. James's, Piccadilly.

“Now, Selina, sit down,” I said; “don't sit up.

Sabina Ann Pipkin meant nothing by calling you a creature. We are all creatures, fond of creature comfort. Take it that way. Don't—don't look like that! Don't 'fly up' because Sabina Ann Pipkin wanted to give you a 'fly down.' Sabina's a bit jealous to-day; the Calendar was round to see me, and when that happens Sabina always calls everybody a 'creature.'"

"It was inspiration made me look like that," said Selina, who still held the handle of the fragile cup in her hand, while the broken pieces lay at her feet.

"Sit down, dear," I said; "it was liver."

Then Selina let me have it. She said I was a wicked, diabolical creature, with one idea in my head, like those heathen mythology creatures with one eye in the centre of their forehead. She said—but what didn't she say? She was as fluent as Mr. Gladstone when he addresses anybody and everybody on any and every subject, and as yellow as an East Indian who has just landed at Southampton, and is squabbling at the Customs over his cargo of presents, for which his expectant friends are eagerly waiting.

"What did the liver mean when you took it for inspiration?" I said when at last she stopped, and then only because Mr. Jerome's book fell from under her arm, and made such a bang on Tintoretto's back that the darling leapt up on my shoulder, and growled like a dog with rage. Tintoretto is my cat. More of Tintoretto by and by.

Selina had gone to the glass over the mantelpiece, and was arranging her veil. She had been talking all the time with it knotted behind her hat, and one end gyrating. Men wouldn't understand how devastating the effect of this had been; that's why I always like men. They seem to me to be so guileless and simple beside women; notice nothing except broad distinctions.

"Meant," she said (passing by that nasty jar about the liver)—"meant," and here she rammed a hairpin into her back hair, and caught in her veil—"meant that *we* three will out-rival *those* three" (and she pointed at the book, which lay upside-down on the floor). "Meant," and she expanded her chest and sawed her arms up and down in true sculling style—"meant 'three women in one boat.'"

A dead silence fell as Selina flung her challenge. Who would take it up—Sabina Ann Pipkin, Tintoretto, or I? I looked hard at Sabina, Sabina looked hard at Tintoretto, and Tintoretto stared hard out of window—a way a cat has. I think cats are very discreet; the race have been so cruelly treated, and have failed so utterly in founding homes for themselves like the dogs, that I think this "look out of window" of theirs means, Truth is not evidence, according to law—something like that in their minds. When the house is let, that being shut-out style of thing till the new-comers arrive, that lets the mice accumulate till the family return, has given cats in general that far-away look.

The dead silence became oppressive at last. There is nothing, to my mind, so oppressive as a dead silence, simply because silence never is dead—it's so awfully, fearfully, spitefully alive. I hope you know what I mean when I get paradoxical—that's what Selina calls my "ass's bray." Sabina Ann Pipkin takes a different view of my paradoxical fits. She says it's liver on the brain, working in the cells of the brain. But to go looking backward, as I said before, the silence at last became dreadful—it was a silence that could be heard; it became so alive with the intense and bursting desire we all had to out-rival those "three men in a boat."

Tintoretto was the first to move. She jumped deliberately from my shoulder to the floor, and sat down

on the cover of *Three Men in a Boat*. Then she licked her paws and shut her left eye.

Tintoretto had always this horrid profane way of winking. It was not the sun in her eyes, for she did it in November, in the middle of a dense London fog. It was a nasty old Jewish trick evolved in this cat. I was often ashamed of her, more especially when she winked at the Calendar.

"Well?" said Selina.

"Well?" said Sabina Ann Pipkin.

"Well?" said I. Then, as if moved by one inspiration, we seized hands, and capered in a wild ring round Tintoretto seated on the book.

Selina's end of veil got loose again, and wagged frantically, and Sabina's new American screwed-in pivot-tooth, of which she is so awfully proud, took the opportunity of falling out. As for me, I was always as downright in-and-out tidy as any old maid, and I hung together in that mad romp as perfectly as the most approved of the type.

Not a hair turned, not one.

When at last we ceased jumping and swishbacking, we fell panting into three chairs, and, woman-like, took stock of one another.

Sabina Ann Pipkin was laughing as it is given to few to laugh—a convulsed, silent sort of arrangement in sepulchral regions. She was facing the glass and the tooth was not.

Suddenly she stopped.

"My pivot!" she said. "Where is my pivot? O!"

"Don't take it in the boat," I said; "it will be sure to sink us. You will be for ever searching for it. It will wreck us if you do, I'm certain."

"Where should I be without it?" said Sabina Ann morosely. "Without it indeed!"

"Where you are now," I said. "It's quite true, many matters hang on a pivot, but not boating matters."

"My brother, the winner of the Wingfields, the Diamonds, the Colquhouns, will put us all up to a wrinkle," said Selina excitedly. "He knows the Thames up and down—he and his trainer Joe."

"Capital!" said I. "When shall we start, and what clothes shall we take?"

"I hope we shall have some adventures," said Sabina Ann, sentimentally closing her eyes.

"I hope we shall have some good pulls," said Selina, feeling her arms reflectively.

"I hope we shan't regret it," said I, pensively examining my nails.

"Regrets are lines without baits," said Sabina Ann, awaking from her sentimental dreams. "Give our regrets to Tintoretto on our return."

"Tintoretto will accompany us," said I. "I go nowhere without Tintoretto."

"Then I only hope it won't rain," said Selina, who I must say is always practical. "Fancy Tintoretto's fur! that can't be done up like my last year's boa."

"Which of us will do cox'n?" said Sabina Ann suddenly. "Which is the smallest of the three?"

"Which!" I said indignantly. "As if it required two thoughts. What delusions some of us have about our personal appearance!"

"O dear! how indignant we are!" said Sabina Ann. "Come, let us measure; well-proportioned people are always on the slope."

"Very much on the slope," I said. "Some people are so well-proportioned that if they slope away altogether nobody would be the wiser for their good proportions."

"My shoulders are like a sign-post," said Selina.

"The right goes bang away to Thames Ditton, the left to Marlow Lock."

"You must be stroke, of course," said Sabina Ann. "You are powerfully built. Phoebe and I are much of a build."

I'm Phoebe.

"I deny the compliment, Sabina Ann," I said tartly. "I'm of the Highland build. You, too, are at least half a head shorter than me."

"Measure," said Sabina Ann, and her eyes challenged mine.

"By all means," said I stiffly. "Don't tumble over Tintoretto."

"I have lived at dancing academies," said Sabina Ann airily. "I tumble over nothing."

As she spoke she gave Tintoretto a violent kick, and with one hideous mew it sprang nearly up the chimney. Selina tried to coax it down, while Sabina Ann and I measured. Her head was, of course, tucked down in the nape of my neck, as I had foreseen.

"Sit forward, cox'n," said I; "and I'm bow, and she's stroke, and the champion of the Thames will coach us, and we will start from Molesey Lock next Wednesday, all being well; and we must take no luggage, or, at least, as little as possible. A serge skirt is the thing, and a blouse of washing material—one off and one on. Straw hats, with the name of our boat, the Sirens; one pair of boots on and none off—one travelling-bag between us, in fact. Our toothbrushes the only triple commodity needed that I can see. Then with regard to cooking utensils, let's take a saucepan and carry everything therein; a kettle, three plates, three mugs, and a knife, fork, and spoon apiece."

"Who will do the housekeeping?" said Selina.

"Who is the best manager?"

"How ridiculous you are, Selina," I said, "to talk of management under such circumstances as we propose!"

"How ridiculous to contemplate anything of the kind without it!" said Selina.

"I hate the word," I said crossly; "it means political economy."

"Now, please, don't be clever," said Sabina Ann.

"Let the cox'n house-keep—I mean boat-keep," I said.

"You must not be dainty, then, if I do it," said Sabina Ann. "I suppose the grocers will send the things after me that I order."

To this, somehow, there was no reply; Selina waived the question, and so did I.

"What shall we do if it rains?" said Sabina Ann. "We can't row in waterproofs."

"There, cox'n, you will have the advantage of us," said I; "you can pull the strings very well in a waterproof if it should; but the 'forecast' says fine weather in September."

"Let us be nautical in our language," said Selina a little irritably. "Don't talk of 'pulling the strings.'"

"Well, well," I said, "it was a slip."

"My brother would have nothing to do with us if we talked like that," said Selina.

"I doubt if he will as it is," I said, for I'm easily depressed.

"Nonsense!" said Sabina Ann, who was plunging frantically about the carpet searching for the lost tooth; "he may be proud to coach such a crew."

"If pluck will be of service," said I, "in that I won't be lacking."

"Pluck is the distinguishing feature of a true English girl," said Selina; "I'm English to the backbone."

"O, bother the backbone!" said I. "Don't get anatomical."

"Tintoretto must have her kennel," I said after a pause, "and her velvet cushion; she will be the one picturesque feature in the affair."

I saw that neither Selina nor Sabina Ann relished this, for both were silent.

"My goodness!" I said, "what about her milk? She won't touch tin-milk. She must lap water," I continued, for I was determined to take her, and I saw that Sabina Ann and Selina were about to say "Leave her behind."

"The rough surface of a cat's tongue," said Selina (who was a bit of a quack), "won't permit."

"Tintoretto is to come," I thundered.

"Won't take advice; just your style," said Sabina Ann.

"'Advice' should be called 'adverse,'" I said; "that's the way it always blows. Tintoretto and I are inseparable."

"I hope it won't be a case of 'In death they were not divided,'" said Selina, glancing at Sabina Ann, who had thrown herself on the couch in an attitude expressive of contented expectation. "I hope we sha'n't all be drowned."

"Pah! Naught never was in danger," said she. "We are three old maids to a dead certainty, as far as I can see; and that after I've the worry of going down [rusticated] because of the Calendar."

"I know I won't be one," I said, "Girton or no Girton."

CHAPTER II.

WE TALK ABOUT IT AGAIN, AND THIS TIME ARE JOINED
BY THE CHAMPION OF THE THAMES AND THE
CALENDAR.

I WAS dusting my room when, on the following day, Selina, Sabina Ann, the Champion, and the Calendar all burst in upon me.

No time to fly to the glass ; if there was a smut on my nose, on my nose it must remain, though I knew it meant ruination to anybody listening to my talk under such circumstances. There was the case of Mrs. Pontifex, the most elegant lady of my acquaintance, discussing peacocks with a smut on the end of her nose, and wondering why her audience tittered.

I flung the duster behind the sofa, and that malignant cat Tintoretto, of course, made for it, and smelt about it, and rolled it up, and finally sat down in the middle of it.

"My brother, the Champion of the Thames," said Selina proudly.

The champion of that hoary old river, I thought ; that grand and mighty river, the dear old Thames ! Could there be a prouder title ?

I don't know why, but as I looked at him my imagination kindled. The glorious river seemed to rush past me. I could hear its strong deep voice, with the thousand echoes of its great past surging beneath. It spoke to me of the time when its cities were not, and its banks were all meadows studded with flowers. It spoke to me

of times when the deep voice of the river spoke to the brain of Man, and said, "Build you cities to dwell in by my pleasant banks, and I will be to you both wisdom and health. Your ships shall sail outward on my glorious bosom, and your children shall learn from the ebb and flow of my tides lessons deep and true as Nature can teach them. I will reflect your days of sunshine and storm. I will mother you in gladness and in sorrow. I, the great river, by whose banks all the gladness, sadness—ay, and the madness—of life have been told out as monks tell their beads over and over again."

I saw the great throngs at Henley behind him. I heard the shouts of the most athletic nation in the world, and, like the flash of an electric current, my thoughts widened and circled till I had left gay Henley far behind me, and had reached the stately river as it flows by glorious Westminster.

The eager life of the Parliaments; the deep note of the Abbey bells; all, all passed before me. I fell in love with the Champion then and there. The poor Calendar looked like an old frilled night-cap beside this imperious beauty of athletic manhood—nay, I went further; I denominated him a poached egg and spinach. I gave myself up to quite an enthusiasm of admiration, and I said to myself, "If the Champion will love me, I'll pull that boat round the world, and if he won't love me I'll be drowned in the rushing waters of a weir with the other two women in the boat."

By-the-bye, I had better describe the Calendar, in case you meet him anywhere, and then I'll describe the Champion, in case you meet *him* anywhere.

The Calendar has reached the dangerous land of forties. I say dangerous because a man at forty is as set as a jelly in a mould. You won't shake his opinions

at forty. They will tumble about later on, when the mould gets too big for his opinions.

The great object which the Calendar seems to have set before him in the race of life is the cultivation of a beard. I used to admire beards, now they fill me with a curious frightened feeling. "The question," said the late witty Lord Beaconsfield, "is whether we are apes or angels." For my part I'm on the side of the angels. I too — but let us avoid these ebullitions of hair. This beard the Calendar is proud of buttoning into the middle button of his waistcoat, and then letting the flowing remainder fly from below the waistcoat. This peculiarity marks him out at once, and you never get beyond a state of painful curiosity about that beard—wondering why he does this, and why his market for hair exceeds all other markets, and why he should button his beard into his waistcoat when there is no gale about.

Now I give you my word that the Calendar is painted from Nature, and is to be met in society any day.

Sabina Ann Pipkin met him at tennis a week ago, and she told me that he had pointed at a great tree which had fallen at the axe, and was lying prostrate, after the fashion of the trees at Hawarden, and that he had remarked:

"How jolly to sit on that fallen tree and propose to a lady, and then have one's dining-room furniture made out of the tree!"

Sabina Ann said, "But supposing you were refused?"

"Then," said he, "make a canoe out of it and paddle away to Australia."

Sabina Ann likes the Calendar, and would willingly have sat on that felled tree and been proposed to. I think she is taken with his quantity of hair, having so very little of her own. She has to scrape it with a hair-

pin to make it fluff out over her forehead. She says she shall be a continuation of forehead fore and aft by-and-bye. I don't deny she may be, for it's getting serious with her and hair-washes are all humbug.

Now let me describe the Champion. But beauty—real beauty—in man or woman—who can describe it? Well, well, the Champion is the direct descendant of the gay Charles II. and the beautiful Eleanor Gwynne, and you can study the first in any gallery of our land, and the second at Hampton Court; and you can evolve exactly the remarkable personal charms which all who know him discover in the person of our Champion. Selina looked at me after the introduction had taken place, and said:

"Good gracious, Phoebe! What is the matter with your eyes? Don't stare so."

"Stare!" I said confusedly, "stare! We shall have to stare about pretty well when we are in the middle of the Thames and in the wash of those steamers."

"Well, let us keep our eyes for needed occasions," said Selina tartly. (I really do believe Selina is jealous. Liver again, I suppose.) "We must not forget to take our globules."

"Sit down," I said, "dear friends, all sit down."

"My dear Phoebe, we are not servants come to be hired," said Selina again. "Don't tell us to sit down!"

(Liver again. O dear!)

The Champion had moved to the sofa, and suddenly I heard a wild yell. Tintoretto had sprung on his back. There she was, clawing and digging her sharp nails into the gay "blazer" round his splendid pillar throat. Some men's throats are exactly like turkeys plucked for Christmas. I have one in my mind's eye now. He was a gentleman who was always quoting Shakespeare, too, and talking about greatness. "Some men are

born great"—and here the neck went up a little—"some men achieve greatness"—here it ascended two inches higher—"and some have greatness thrust upon them," and here turkeys were nothing to it—nothing at all, I declare it. I flew for Tintoretto, and endeavoured to drag her off the Champion's back. At last I succeeded, and then she went for the chimney again.

"Pot her," said the Champion; "she's a brute!"

"Love me, love my cat," I said slyly.

Whereupon the Calendar got hold of the end of the beard at the end of his waistcoat, and began to examine it with microscopic attention, while Sabina Ann got hold of the teapot and poured out tea recklessly. Selina turned colour as usual, but the Champion smiled right gallantly.

"Have you got your boat?" said he, as we all settled down again.

"Yes!" we all said in chorus.

"Where did you get it?" said he. "Is it waterproof? Have you the sliding-seats?"

"We got it from Megson's, Richmond. It has a tarpaulin cover for night and wet weather, and all the appliances for towing, landing, or even dragging, supposing one of us goes overboard—Sabina Ann, for instance!" I exclaimed rashly, "after her 'pivot——'"

I paused. Sabina Ann was looking at me as I had never been looked at before.

"After her 'pivot?'" said the Calendar. "After her gib, you mean."

"Yes, the gib," I said feebly.

"When do you propose to start?" said the Champion. "Shall I train you for a day or two, or do you propose to go right away?"

I looked at Selina, Selina looked at me, and Sabina Ann looked at Selina, while Tintoretto, who had

extricated itself from the chimney, stared again out of window with her air of "Don't look to me to settle knotty questions—if you get into boats get into the right ones, but if into the wrong, don't look to me, Tintoretto, to get you out of them."

It was Sabina Ann Pipkin who spoke.

"Speaking for myself, I should prefer to have a little coaching. My elbow action is, I believe, a little faulty. Speaking generally——"

Here I burst in.

"Coach us first by all means, M. le Wingfield-Colquhoun-Diamonds."

At this sally we all laughed.

The Champion, who, like all champions, is very modest, looked, as he always looks when excessively praised, too proud to take it.

"I shall judge if you are good form from the first," said he, "the moment the oar——".

"Strikes the water," I burst in.

"Never strike the water," said the Champion severely. "The blade should only just be covered; running and sculling, like music, all depend on from where you take action."

"My back does most of my work," said Sabina Ann complacently, "it's so strong."

"So round," I said, "you mean."

"A perfect back should possess curves," said Sabina Ann a little conceitedly, and glancing at the Calendar.

"Flat backs are as ugly as flat-irons."

"I swing my own way," said Selina boisterously. "The last bumping race I was in I pulled so strong that the boat kept on going to one side. We won at a canter."

"Good gracious!" said the Calendar.

He always says "Good gracious!" I think that's why

I have that idea of the frilled night-cap. Women are the "good gracious" element, not men. The Champion understood my smile, for I saw him endeavouring to smother his laughter, and then he got up and put on his cover-coat, and we all followed him to the door, and watched him walk off with his two magnificent lady St. Bernards, Sappho and Nell.

I must tell you that we had appointed to meet at Sabina Ann Pipkin's residence in Richmond on the following Monday, and have one day's coaching before starting.

Sabina Ann lives with her rich old bachelor uncle and maiden aunt, and does much as she likes. She is a good all-round girl, and they know it, and having made up their minds that it is so, they never interfere with her selection of friends, or her frolics by land or river.

Happy Sabina Ann Pipkin! I believe they won't object to the bearded Calendar if he proposes; but I doubt it, for his heart is in his beard, and his mind in his brush and comb. By-the bye, I must not forget to take my sponge-bag, and a box of hair-pins, and sorted pins. Let me try to jog my memory by making a sort of rhyme.

Item.—Sponge-bag, with flannel, soap, and a sponge; a toothbrush; don't forget hair-pins, crimped, straightened, and pronged; pins also, long and short whites; needles in cases like this; and cotton, to swear black is white; string for our parcels, labels for our boxes; O, by-the-bye, we can't take boxes; a button hook, a thimble, scissors, pencil-case, powder-puff, hairwash for Sabina Ann; also nightgown-case—must remember that. So very awkward, can't think of anything more just now, but am sure to later on. Sponge-bag, of course—most important. O, I thought of that before. Tintoretto's

basket and cat's-meat—must remember that. Tintoretto is as fond of her own peculiar meat—which grows on “sticks”—as a Bulgarian is of pork. I shall think of something else when I'm in bed; that's the moment for recovering the lost thought. You catch it tickling your brain just as you're going off, and wake with it dangling about in the early morning, waiting to catch you just as you rise to venture forth on another day's outing.

CHAPTER III.

WE TAKE OUR PRELIMINARY SPIN UP STREAM.

MR. AND MISS PIPKIN, of the Poplars, Richmond Hill, had received us all most kindly. They gave *carte blanche* to Selina and me to stay as long as we liked.

“The friends of Sabina Ann are our friends,” said they. “What's good for one fish is good for another.” We laughed at this because we saw we were expected to; but I never could understand the allusion to fish. If they had said, “What's good for one Ribston is good for another Ribston,” then I should have been in it. By the bye, I wonder why they don't assume the double name, and call themselves the “Ribston-Pipkins.” I discovered afterwards that puns were an hereditary malady in the Pipkin family. Old Mr. Pipkin told me all about it. He said, “My mother made a pun one day when she was ninety. She made it on her birthday. She said she was a ‘ninety-pin.’” What on earth he meant I can't think. The only thing that's worthy of belief at the age of ninety is a well-attested will leaving all one's property out of the family. It's astonishing how the fortunate recipients will declare that the faculties, intellectual and moral, were in full working order. That happened lately in the Calendar's family.

He said he would employ Sir Charles Russell, and show up Nonconformity as it really exists when brought to bear on old ladies of ninety; but I suppose he is too much occupied with the beard to spring that mine.

Sabina Ann is devoted to her aunt. She says Miss Pipkin is so sympathetic! Loves a love affair—sees it all coming in the far distance. Has a wonderful eye, and is awfully clever. Could tell if a man is in earnest in a minute. She says love in earnest is always gloomy. When it is the other thing it's all highy-tighty, flirty-flighty—no backbone.

Sabina Ann says when her aunt declares there is no backbone she looks something awful—just as if she saw a skeleton.

Sabina Ann is not quite sure whether or not her aunt entirely approves of this “three women in a boat” expedition. She said Miss Pipkin has a habit when not particularly well pleased of examining her nails. She will sit and look at them all turned up under her eyes for half-an-hour together when doubtful!

No result follows as a rule, but if she is thoroughly upset about anything, Sabina says she has known her march up-stairs and fetch her incubator and hatch a chicken! Sabina says millions couldn't pay for the happiness that the inventor of the “incubator” has brought into the Pipkin family.

She says nobody knows the full meaning of that glance at the nails, followed by the walk up-stairs, before the arrival of the “incubator” patent but herself.

This is very possible. We have a description of fine scent about each other's tempers more undeviatingly true than Tintoretto's nose after a mouse. The Champion and the Calendar were invited by the Pipkins to join us at luncheon, and after this we were

to have a preliminary spin on the river, for the Champion to see what sort of form we were in.

Old Mr. Pipkin is fearful at meals. Meal is the only word to apply to his proceedings. He gets the table-napkin under his chin and makes such a front of it that it's worse than a Bishop's apron. Then he measures the dishes with an eye which knows love only in this form. O, it's terrible! He can't bear you to speak, except to the dish, and over these he murmurs incantations, which take the form of blessing and cursing.

There was a curry, among other things. He did give it the cook over that curry. "Hot! hot! hot! Curry her! Curry her! A woman with a temper for condiments like that ought to be burnt outside, instead of being permitted to burn our insides!"

Mr. Pipkin's nose upsets me completely. It looks as if the scent of every dish from Esau's "mess of pottage" onward has ascended beneath its ancestral curvatures. His nose looks on such capital terms with his ventricles of digestion, the two seem to play into each other's hands.

So different to many noses! Most folks have such disgusted noses! Outraged noses! With the air of pollution! political! social! moral! and culinary!

Sabina Ann looks very subdued when at the ancestral board. She won't look like that going down stream.

She says eating, taken seriously, affects her like mathematics; it's like calculating on the strength or weakness of one's digestion.

Selina, on the other hand, calls it the higher education of the ventricles of digestion.

She says Mr. Pipkin is wonderful that way, and would come out Senior Wrangler of the higher education of the membraneous receptacle.

Miss Pipkin looks as if she enjoys every other part of life except the feeding.

She looks disgusted at the poor dead things which give us life—or, rather, keep us alive—but she does not say so. Her lips have an air of “lock and key” now and then. By the bye, the idea of starting from Molesey Lock has been abandoned. We start from Richmond Bridge. The Pipkins say they want to see us off, and that’s the only way they can manage it, as Miss Pipkin will be busy with the “incubator” to-morrow, and Mr. Pipkin has a new “curry” coming out.

When, at last, luncheon was over—the signal being the solemn removal of Mr. Pipkin’s gouty left leg on to a footstool of special proportion and peculiar make—we three women rushed to put on our hats and fall into march.

I saw the Champion glance at us much as a commanding officer looks at his recruits; and I saw that he was thoroughly amazed with the adiposity of Sabina Ann’s figure, or *figure*, as I heard an ultra-particular lady pronounce it.

“Ah,” I thought exultantly—“ah, he will make her do her five miles before breakfast before he gives her a place after all.” To my surprise the Champion, however, said nothing.

When we arrived at the landing-stage he merely told us to get into our boat, which was awaiting us with a great tawny-skinned boatman (Jack Britton), a well-known riverman, standing in the middle of it, with his boat-hook making fast. We purpose to be away from Monday till Saturday. I don’t know precisely how long Mr. Jerome’s three men were away, but we don’t want to outrival them altogether. No; only want to show that three women are equal to three men in the boating line, and a deal better in the cooking, which is an old hereditary capacity in the sex.

“Get in, Selina; get in, Sabina Ann,” I said airily;

"I follow ;" and follow I did, tripping over Sabina's serge skirt, and tearing it nearly off her back.

Sabina only smiled. But O, that smile ! it will haunt me. "Her sweet smile haunts me yet."

"Where will the pots and pans go ?" said Selina.

"And my portmanteau !" said Sabina Ann. "I shall want a needle and thread if clumsiness and awkwardness are to prevail."

"Where will Tintoretto sit ?" I said meekly ; for really it is a dreadful feeling to tread on a toe or a skirt.

"With the other cats," said a melodious whisper from somewhere.

I glanced at the waving tree tops. Ah, life was glad enough ! After that I felt quite equal to commanding the rudder-lines and musing pensively on torn skirts, divided skirts, and skirting by the river's edge.

"Now," said the Champion, "I shall bid you three ladies farewell. I commit you into the hands of Jack Britton. These words before I go : Keep under the bank, sit up, and don't bucket."

"Is there anything else I have to tell them ?" I said, at once taking my position as cox., and assuming the authority of coach.

"Keep your stroke long and light, turn your wrists under, and get your hands away sharp ; avoid racing, and 'see that ye fall not out by the way.'"

"Now we are off ! Good-bye, Champion ! Thanks for your 'tips.' Forward ! Row !"

It was flood-tide and the good boat sped at the strong stroke of our robust scullers.

Sabina occupies the stroke thwart, Selina is bow.

I must say I feel proud as we sweep along on the top of the tide, and take our preliminary canter. The Champion is gazing after us well pleased.

His lips seem to form the words "Women can

scull!" Jack Britton is running along the tow-path. His red handkerchief knotted round his neck (in which the veins stand out like the sinews of an oak) makes a bright bit of colour against the vivid blue of the sky. The white dancing light, which fills the air with a strange translucent haze, gathers about him as he runs and shouts, and shouts and runs.

In the full force of her new vigour bow begins to get ahead of stroke; her sculls are literally leaping in and out. Suddenly the handles of her sculls go bang into Sabina's broad back, and there punish her; but, wonderful to say, Sabina pays no heed. On she goes, as if impervious to pain.

Enthusiasm knows no pain. On past Pope's Villa; on past stately houses rising dream-like from the banks!

On, on, on! as if the strong, sweet current, which flows away from the heart of the mighty river had leapt into their hearts and made their pulses beat with its own strength, their pulses pulse with its own pulse.

Teddington Weir is reached. Here we take breath; the waters swirl about us.

The tumult of the weir tumbles about our ears and makes our voices sound like an echo.

"Where is Jack Britton?" says stroke, who is not "winded" in the least.

"Where, indeed?" said I. "Who can run with us? Who can tell us something we don't know in sculling?" I continued. "Sabina Ann, I congratulate you! Selina, I embrace you! Get away down stream! I'm ready to start on Monday, and to be cox. for the World's Championship."

CHAPTER IV.

WE GET AWAY UP STREAM.

THEY all stood on Richmond Bridge at midday on that particular Monday, on the hottest of our often hot September days, to see us off. Mr. Pipkin's gouty left leg was the last thing I saw; it was hanging between the rails somewhere. It's a conspicuous feature always. Sometimes I think he is proud of having the gout. It's a kind of passport to ancestry; there is lineage in gout. The Calendar's beard had escaped from the middle button, and was flying like a kite in the breeze. Miss Pipkin was looking nervously at it. She confessed to Sabina Ann that he reminded her of the king in the Old Testament whose hair grew, as well as his nails, out of all conscience; and that she thought there must be something sinful about the Calendar, and she hoped her niece would not look at him from that point. She had added oracularly, "from that point."

"From the point of the beard, I suppose?" Sabina had rejoined. Whereupon Miss Pipkin, being annoyed, had retired with the incubator.

The Champion hates cats, and I thought it particularly sweet of him to carry Tintoretto for me, and place her with his own hands on her gorgeous cushion next me.

"She spits," said Sabina Ann. "Take care, Monsieur Wingfields."

"It would be an honour to be spat upon by Tintoretto," said the Champion gallantly.

"Is that portmanteau fixed up?" said Selina. "And where is the kettle and all the rest of it?"

THREE WOMEN IN ONE BOAT.

"Tintoretto will take care of the kettle," I said complacently; "that's in her line. I believe everything is here. Now away! away! away!"

We were off in good earnest. Richmond Bridge is receding from view. Already, in the rich noonday sun, it is poetised into some old-world bridge, from whose parapets a race of men and women, with young hearts and enthusiastic brains, look out on the great expanse of waters, and dream of order, law, and government as it should be, with senators versed in wisdom and graced with the safest of all political weapons—heart.

The meadows to the left are starred with ox-eye daisies, which have lingered long this year, as if loth to go; the long grasses sigh aloud, and nod upwards at the blinding sun; late butterflies flit happily and yet uncertainly from leaf to blade—sweet butterflies, which year by year become rarer and rarer, as the cruel pin of the collector pierces their fragile bodies, and they take their place in Mr. So-and-so's collection. The air, with the scent of the river and the meadows, fans one's spirits into gay accord with all that this dear glad Nature would teach us to-day of rest and happiness.

Care is not for us.

Let care crack grim jokes with whom it will to-day. For us the secret of the river, the secret of the stars, the secret of the sun, is to be unfolded!

We have got clear away from conventionalities and burdensome trappings which harness us in our every-day surroundings. We are water-nymphs, we are Undines, we are creatures in flesh, blood, and spirit; but for one week we will just float out on these glad waters, and take the atmosphere of Nature, pure Nature, as our guide to the temples of pleasure.

"Phœbe! Phœbe! Phœbe!"

How I do detest my Christian name! I'm sure it's more fitted to be a heathen's. If ever I have children, won't I give them pretty names, and knock all that silly nonsense about calling Mary Ann after grandma on the head!

What's in a name, indeed? Why, mind's in it. Use your ancestry as your intellectual guide-book. Study its names, its virtues, its follies, for the express purpose of forming your own code of action, and study it for no other purpose.

You may just as well adopt grandma's ideas on education as grandma's Christian name. Phœbe! Am I like a Phœbe? Is there a single feeble line about me? Fancy if the Champion proposes to me—"Phœbe, do you love me?" What's the use of vowing about the strength of my devotion when I'm only Phœbe?

"Phœbe!" (this time Selina is in agonies). "Don't you see what's coming? There! I told you so."

Bump, bump, bump! The nose of our boat is buried in the stern of an ancient tub manned by the most eccentric-looking crew I ever saw. At the prow sat an old gentleman in swallow-tails and white tie and parson's crush-hat. By his side a lady bedizened as if for a masquerade. It wasn't so much her dress that arrested me—though in all conscience that was queer enough, with its epauletted shoulders, and wisp of straw, with a rosebud, for a bonnet—as it was her face. O heavens! how our faces betray us! Do what we will with the slow mask called Time, its sardonic leer at all vanity is a thing best to bow to.

This madam had fought Time not with weapons intellectual or spiritual, but with cosmetics and unguents—Pandora's box, with a lie at the bottom—and Time had regarded her with that strange hard awful look with which it drives its furious car.

She was very angry with us—very angry indeed.

"Your name!" she exclaimed angrily—"If names you have. In my day there were but some dozen names we thought worth knowing, but nowadays everything has a name."

"Ah, madam," I said, "in these days not only has everything a name, but everything has a voice. Voices which can hardly articulate yet for lack of the grace of education; voices which are clamorous and now more like idiots than like men. I speak of the voices of the numbers. We are only 'three things' in a boat. We are rejoicing in the liberty of incognitas at present. Dare we ask for your name? We grow apologetic and deferential in the society of our superiors. We have our apologetic politicians, our apologetic preachers, and our apologetic lady-scullers."

"My name!" she said, "my name! Row on, my good men, and get us safe to land, if you can, and keep well away for the future from this new river nuisance, this horrid development of—of—of——"

"Healthy womanhood," I said cheerfully. "Pull away, bow."

We are unlocked, and off again with a long, slow, sweeping measure, which sets us all singing; and this is the song we sang, our voices blending in perfect rhythm with the stroke of the oars, and my body keeping perfect time as I swing:

"Fair as the morning, gay as the day,
Floats our glad bark as we sing our lay,
Joy at the helm, bliss at the prow,
Three women afloat in a boat, Yo-ho!

"We are glad with the joy of a new day's birth,
We are free with the freedom of woman's worth,
We are strong with the strength of the river's breath
Three women afloat in a boat, Yo-ho!

"The stars come out as the sun goes in,
The day's toil ends as the night begins,
The glowworm's lamp is our light to fame,
Three women afloat in a boat, Yo-ho !

"The kingdom of women has yet to come,
The race for wealth is not half begun ;
In the heart of a man there is room for all,
Three women afloat in a boat, Yo-ho !

"Yo-ho ! (*Echo*) Yo-ho !
Yo-hoy ! (*Echo*) Yo-hoy !"

We sing. Well, there is no doubt about it ! Selina has a profound bass ! Hers is a man's voice—it never was meant to be a woman's ! Her "Yo-ho !" and "Yo-hoy !" is quite equal to Signor Foli's ! Some men fall in love with a woman's voice, some with a foot, some with a face, some with a mind, some with nothing in particular, but with the indiscriminate whole. Selina's bass voice will have to be fallen in love with. Down will her lover go into the depths of those great vocal organs, and there will he remain captive. "Yo-ho ! Yo-hoy !"

Sabina Ann has a small, even a silly, voice ! It angers me. She sings at penny readings. One song of hers is all about "muscles"—she calls them *moscles*—*moscles* !—and does look so perfectly idiotic, even our curate gave way and giggled last time she sang about those disgusting muscles !

I never liked him so well—a touch of nature ! O dear ! there's so much human nature about, that a touch of nature, as our poets call it, does one good.

Still, Sabina's voice, well watered by the river Thames, is not so bad : it gains a touch of poetry and partakes of the spirit of an echo.

Now about my voice. My brother, who can't sing a bit, says he is the only member of our family who can

sing. Strange infatuation! Now I have the family voice.

There was an old gentleman standing on the bank fishing as our boat flashed past. He was fishing with his mouth open—attractive to the fish, I suppose. My goodness! I thought he never would stop opening it, as he listened to the song of three women. I thought we had hypnotised him. The rod fell from his hand, and the fish, I conclude, got away; but he never noticed. There he stood.

O, to sketch him!

"Do it again!" at last he shouted. "Do it again! Bravo, ladies! Bravissimo, ladies, or mermaids, or whatever you are! Do it again!"

"Not if we know it," said Selina (*sotto voce*). "We close our song and hope you will close your mouth. What a digestion that old gentleman will get in time," she continued, "if he goes on like that! He will become the favourite resting-place of all the gnats in creation."

"Don't talk about it," said Sabina. "Anything of that sort makes me feel so faint. Let's hook on and have some tea."

Now anybody who knows anything about the river knows that to hook on is not always easy. Selina, who is a judge, says it's more difficult to hook on to a bank than even to a young man. That, of course, may be Selina's experience. I am not prepared to dispute matters of the heart with anybody. There are ladies who can "hook on" up to eighty. Society will bear me witness to this fact.

Some ladies learn the art late in life, and there is very little chance for the poor men when they take to it, with experience making up for all other deficiencies. Arm youth with experience, youth would be invincible; but youth, like raw sugar, is apt to cloy.

To take life gracefully, and to manage it easily, is high art indeed.

Some people make an awful mess of it, as a moment's observation can tell us ; that war with Fate, Destiny, or one's lot is one too many for them.

"Hook on, Phœbe ! Hook on, Phœbe ! I won't row another stroke !"

Sabina has flung her arms above her head, and her sculls rest idly in the river. Selina has thrown her straw hat on the opposite seat, and is shaking down her pigtails. Selina's hair is grand. I intend to have a bit of fun with it—tie a crab on to each tail ! Play monkey tricks for once in a way, and no apologies. "There is no having a bit of fun nowadays," said a lady, "without apologising for it !"

We hear of bishops playing with kittens. Why shouldn't we lay folk play with crabs ? I'll be on those crabs before our river expedition is over.

My hook at last fixed the bank, and we moor our boat just under that lovely little island above Thames Ditton. The scene is one of fariyland. The September sun is on the wane, but before he goes he flames out like some great jovial god in whom all the gladness and love of life is gathered. He fires his glances into the deep depths of the giant trees, and makes them crimson. He flings his arrows of radiant light across the river, and turns it into a sea of molten gold. The swan's whiteness is purified into the similitude of angels' raiment. The homely touch of a kettle hanging, gipsy-fashion, in its quaint little tripod arrangement is just that link of earth with heaven which makes the divinity and humanity of life. We were about to gather round and enjoy rest after labour, when a yell in which all the nightmares of creation's ages seemed to have gathered made us start to our feet.

CHAPTER V.

RIVER MEN, WOMEN, AND THINGS.

"DON'T let us witness it," said Sabina Ann. "Somebody has evidently thrown themselves into the river, and if we don't take care we shall have the disagreeable task of appearing as witnesses. Let us get out of the way."

Revelations in character! I looked at Sabina Ann. After all, there is a good deal of green cheese about me (Phœbe). I had thought Sabina Ann one of the most unselfish of girls.

"Get up in the tree, Sabina Ann," I said severely, "and sit there and see your brothers and sisters drown before your eyes. The shade of the trees will cover you; the light of the sun will blind you. Get up in your tree! You are not the first, or the last, who has beaten a like retreat when their pockets, or their courage, or their ease was likely to be invaded. Run! mount! hide!"

"Get the life-buoy from the boat," said Selina. "Get the rope! get the air-cushion!"

Selina was running, and screaming this out as she ran. Selina is always as quick as lightning. I followed as fast as I could, while Sabina remained by the kettle. I turned as I fled to regard her. She was watching the smoke ascend from its spout, quite reflectively and comfortably. I believe I heard her say, "The world is full of screams. I shall only listen to my own. Sing on, kettle, and give me a good cup of tea."

By the time I reached Selina, I found her in full altercation with a stout lady, who, accompanied by her

son, had moored her boat a few yards from ours, and I soon discovered that she was the author of those frightful screams.

"Your horrid cat," she was saying to Selina, "has stolen my potted ham—devoured every bit of it! I believe it's possessed, for when I took my umbrella to chase it away, it just got itself up in a ball and looked at me, ready to spring, ready to bite—ready for anything. Imagine the strength of it, after eating all that potted ham. Wretch!"

"I'm glad it's nothing more serious," said Selina. "Your screams were so dreadful I thought at least you were drowning. May you never scream for anything more serious than the loss of your potted ham, for which I hope you will permit me to—to——" (Selina's hand was in her pocket; she was bending forward quite gracefully.)

"Permit me to interfere," said the son. "My mother [here he examined his knickerbockered leg] has [he smiled faintly]—has [he blushed to the roots of his hair] has—condescended to be desperately upset about the potted meat; it is a pity [here he again examined his hose, and speculated about the knickerbocker]. It is the way of ladies, it is the habit of the sex. Trifles occupy them, potted ham convulses them. Screams, alas! are not yet potted down. Let me [here he raised his hat a quarter of an inch] reassure you, on the part of my mother, whose nerves are like bells gone wrong or yet unhung, there is no reason for the [here he delved in his pocket and brought out a very elaborately carved and elegantly wrought card-case] scare—or shall I say reason in it? Potted ham, whether devoured by cats of the genus fur or the genus feminine, will multiply. Everything multiplies." He raised his hat an inch further, and drew out a card, examined it critically as if

to identify himself with his card, and then handed it to Selina, who waved it away deprecatingly, yet always charmingly. Selina is always well-bred. There are heads you can't upset; hers is one.

"Ah!" said Knickerbocker (we never knew him by name). "Ah, I see; I understand! The fence of a perfectly well-bred Englishwoman is a fence stout enough to guard her from all adventurous introductions. The river Thames is sufficient chaperon for such a one." He raised his hat altogether, and we felt ourselves bowed away. I gave Selina a nudge—I couldn't help it—as we walked off.

"My dear," I said, "he has cooked his sausage at the 'school,' and she—she has saved her pence to send him there and be potted down in the end by him into the apology for motherhood at which he appraises her."

"Well," said Sabina Ann, as we drew near, "who was wise after all, you or I? I've had my tea; now have yours. I'm not easily scared. I knew it was nothing. I've had all the bother of making the tea, and warming the game-pie (yes, I've heated it), and now I suppose you are both going to turn on me and call me a sneak and a coward! I've more wordly wisdom in my little finger than you two have in your whole bodies. Never interfere in other people's affairs. Attend to your own banking-book in life, and on no pretext whatever get embroiled with anybody else's. I know a gentleman at this moment who has a female canary bird, which he says is without a mate, and eating its head off at his expense. That canary he offered to me. I refused it. Why should I bother myself with his mateless female canary with its enormous appetite? I knew better. Wait till you know as much of life as I do. Wait, and remember you needn't be old to know life; that's the frightful error which has caused, and is causing, such

false policy in Church and State—decrepitude holding the keys nearly everywhere. In these days the young have learnt life. The young know it, and the young can rule, and reign, and administrate.”

“O, game enough!” I said. “This is a capital pic; but if you think your sophistries, Sabina Ann, blind me for one moment, you are mistaken. I know you now, with your tree shelter.”

“I’m glad you do,” said Sabina Ann. “Let’s all have another cup of tea, and then let us embark. We must pull on to Sunbury.”

Somehow we are all quite silent as we float off again. A mellow soft light is on the river, and afterglow on tree and sky. We reflect the mood of Nature. We are in deepest sympathy with her. She belongs to all, but she owns the few. To these she absolutely gives herself; to these she unfolds the secret of her passionate workings in the ebb and flow of tides, and light and shadow, and life and death (if death she knows; for who can call it death when it is but to produce a more abundant life that the leaf falls and the day dies?).

Kingfishers are skimming and dipping their beaks in the swift-flowing current. The kingfishers are the children of the stars, I think, they are such brilliant birds; and the larks are the songs that the stars have embodied, and the nightingales are the dreams that the stars have forgotten.

“I’m thinking about lodgings,” said Selina suddenly. “Lodgings are like a heavy cake to a delicate digestion. I never could digest lodgings. There is the bed, and there is the carpet; there is the table-cloth and the cutlery, and the maid-servant’s hands, and the landlady’s cap. Glance, and welcome.”

“What’s the use of going on like that?” said Sabina. “I thought you had more stuffing, Selina.”

"I'm a goose without stuffing, I suppose," said Selina, "but, O dear, if you see me go snuffing round that bed, don't laugh, please don't laugh!"

"You are so hideously economical, you two people," said Sabina, who inherits all her aunts' and uncles' combined fortunes, and can afford to bounce a bit. "Why not go to hotels?"

"Certainly not," I said. "Selina and I are too wise for that. Fancy the hall porter rushing at that minnow of a portmanteau there and saying, 'What's to follow?' Fancy the bill with which the clerk at the desk would bait three Innocents Abroad, and fancy venturing to go to hotels with any other idea in your head than one of ardent desire to help the limited company into that state of comfort, luxury, and ease, to which every one of the directors is most justly entitled! Besides, my dear Sabina Ann, Selina and I have no Ribston Pipkins in our market. The roseate apple of concord is for you. Celery, spelt sellery, is for us, Selina and I share the fate of the Calendar. Our mines blew up and our shares were kites."

"There are moments," said Sabina Ann sentimentally, closing her eyes, which always gives a lovesick look, "when I wish I was poor. I shall be married for my money, I know it. I shall never feel quite sure that in this whole wide, wide world there is one—yes, one!—who values me at my true worth, and looks beyond the dollar to the——"

"Crab!" I screamed, for, no mistake about it, Sabina Ann had caught one now. Over she went! Her heels—I saw them last in the new moon. Blown up in the new moon was she. Her hat—that went gaily skittling up stream, a swan after it, with an eye to millinery, I suppose. Her hair—well, we won't say much about it, but I'm more convinced than ever that hair as a natural

shrubby waving about a face is very charming. The light beat down on Sabina Ann's crown—the kind, and, alas! the cruel light.

It was all very trying indeed, and what made it worse was Selina's *sangfroid*. She pulled on quite calmly. She paid no more attention to Sabina's heels than the eels in the river. She even began to sing, which I confess was exasperating. To hear anybody singing when one is being made to look a fool is enough to exasperate the temper of even an Archbishop.

I remember once long ago being caught in a river mist just up above Marlow. There were three of us in that boat, and one of us was a little Irishman just back from Cambridge. We were in the hands of a novice, his sister and I; and, I remember, as the great white mist thickened and coiled and wound itself about us, I felt a great fear come over me, for day had met night and night had welcomed day, and no sun yet, and on that now dreadful river. At this juncture Charlotte (yes, her name was Charlotte) lifted up her voice and sang some Scotch ditty. (Nothing so melancholy as a Scotch ditty in a mist.) "O," I said, "stop; nothing short of the Scots Guards' band would put courage into me. Keep the Scotch ditty for papa after dinner, when his ducks are all swans, and for goodness' sake, if we are to go down, let us go down in silence."

"The swan thinks your hat a loaf of bread," said Selina presently. "Clever of it. Straw is related to wheat, and wheat is related to bread, and bread is a great favourite with swans."

Selina's oar went out and caught the hat, and she handed it complacently to Sabina, who said feebly:

"I shall feel better now when I've got a covering! There is so much protection in a hat."

She absolutely began to close her eyelids in that

disgustingly sentimental way again over her rather fine eyes. (Fine black eyes, she calls them.)

It's extraordinary the effect that poetry garbed as the coming man has on the imagination of a girl who, like Sabina, awakes rather late in life to some idea of taking matters of the heart united to the "ring" in hand. Sabina Ann, who is really endowed with an unusual amount of acumen on all subjects outside the pale of love, becomes, directly she touches it, completely limp, and like a young lady's diary hidden away in her drawer with a fadeless rose and a shrivelled spray of maidenhair bound together with a fine wire thread, and pierced through and through with the darts of outrageous fortune.

CHAPTER VI.

LANDLADIES AND GREEK ODES.

WE left our boat in charge of an antediluvian old boatman, who owned a boat-shed by the pleasant banks of Sunbury. He was a countryman of some sort. We didn't go into the climate of his accent. Everything was "terrible funny" with him, and he was "properly glad to see ladies manning a boat! He didn't see "why womenfolk shouldn't row a boat as well as menfolk. Why there's plenty on 'em as can do as good a day's work, and better, than some of these coves as calls themselves working men. They will pipe to you," said he, "yes, they'll pipe to you, and there it ends—all smoke. What's the difference in a day's work between a man and a woman? Just the same as 'twixt the price of bloaters and herrings. Come to ask the price of bloaters, 2*d.* a pair; come to ask the price of herrings, 1*d.* each, come to ask which is the most tasty like, why, six of one, half-a-dozen of t'other."